

Notes written down on reading Adam Gopnik's article, titled "The Information: How the *Internet* gets inside us," in the February 14 & 21, 2011 issue (pp. 124-30) of *The New Yorker*.

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Cognitive entanglement is the rule of life.

The medium does matter. A book focuses our attention, isolates us from the myriad distractions that fill our everyday lives. A networked computer does precisely the opposite.

As we adapt to the intellectual environment of the Net, our thinking becomes shallower.

The Internet breaks down our capacity for reflective thought.

The digital crowd has a way of elbowing its way into everything.

When people struggle to describe the state that the Internet puts them in they arrive at a remarkably familiar picture of disassociation and fragmentation. Life was once whole, continuous, stable; now it is fragmented, multi-part, shimmering around us, unstable and impossible to fix.

The character of modern life is that everything falls apart.

A sense of vertiginous overload is the central experience of modernity.

Information overload is nothing new.

The real gains and losses of the Internet era are to be found not in altered neurons or empathy tests but in the small changes in mood, life, manners, feelings it creates—in the texture of the age. There is, for instance a simple, spooky sense in which the Internet is just a loud and unlimited library in which we now live—as if one went to sleep every night in the college stacks, surrounded by pamphlets and polemics and possibilities. It is odd

and new to be living in the library, but there isn't anything odd and new about the library.

A social network is crucially different from a social circle, since the function of a social circle is to curb our appetites and of a network to extend them. Everything once inside is outside, a click away; much that used to be outside is inside, experienced in solitude. And so the peacefulness, the serenity that we feel away from the Internet has less to do with being no longer harried by others than with being less oppressed by the force of your own inner life. Shut off your computer, and your self stops raging quite as much or quite as loud.\_

It is the wraparound presence, not the specific evils of the machine that oppresses us. Simply reducing the machine's presence will go a long way toward alleviating the disorder.

The Internet produces an absence of context, the disintegration of the frame.

Thoughts are bigger than the things that deliver them. Our contraptions may shape our consciousness, but it is our consciousness that makes our credos, and we mostly live by those.